

Claims

1. A method for preparing a milk-based composition comprising a homopolysaccharide comprising the steps of

- (i) fermenting a mixture comprising milk and a fermentable sugar with a homopolysaccharide producing microorganism under anaerobic conditions, and
- (ii) stopping the fermentation before the pH of the mixture drops below pH 5.5,

the pH of the mixture being unregulated during fermentation.

2. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the pH of the mixture remains within the range of pH 5.8 to 6.2 during fermentation.

3. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the microorganism is a dextran and/or fructan producing lactic acid bacterium.

4. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the microorganism is a lactic acid bacterium of the genus *Leuconostoc*.

5. A method according to Claim 4 wherein the microorganism is a dextran-producing strain of *Leuconostoc mesenteroides* subspecies *mesenteroides* or subspecies *dextranicum*.

6. A method according to Claim 5 wherein the microorganism comprises a strain selected from *Leuconostoc mesenteroides* subspecies *mesenteroides* ATCC 10830A, or *Leuconostoc mesenteroides* subspecies *dextranicum* 605.

7. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the homopolysaccharide is produced in an amount of at least 0.3% by weight of the composition.

8. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the mixture is inoculated with beadlets comprising a preculture of the microorganism.

9. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the fermentation is carried out at a temperature of from 10° to 30°C.

10. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the fermentation is carried out for a period of from 4 to 48 hours.

11. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the fermented mixture is diluted with non-fermented mixture.

12. A food product comprising a composition prepared according to the method of Claim 1.

13. A food product according to Claim 13 which is an ice cream confection.

14. A composition comprising an ice-cream pre-mix and a homopolysaccharide-producing microorganism.